

compelled to avail themselves of the privileges afforded. Two modes of dealing with vagrant children have been spoken of. The first was as to whether there should be a positive enactment compelling parents to keep their children at school during a defined term of years; the second (which had received the most general support) was to empower municipalities to compel attendance, or, in case of wilful neglect to attend school, to inflict a slight fine or punishment either on parents or their children. By this mode, each municipality could control its own vagrant children much better than could the general government. It might be objected to, that this would be invading parental rights; but the answer to this was: First, that where compulsory education exists, the legitimate rights of parents are really not infringed upon; second, that children have their rights, which they have derived from their Maker, and which parents cannot take away. And on this principle, it was the duty of the State to protect the weak and helpless. A parent has no right to maim or to starve his child; much less, to maim or starve him mentally or morally. The State would interfere, and assumed the right to do so, in the one case,—why not in the other? In the third place, States have a right to protect themselves against the injury arising from children being thrown upon society as uneducated vagrants. It was a duty of the existing adult population to promote, as much as possible, the education of the rising youth, and they might depend upon it that the country would be just what they chose to make it, religiously and educationally. He was inclined to favor compulsory attendance at some schools—not necessarily at the public schools. Republican Switzerland had vigorous laws on this subject, more so than even despotic Prussia, where children, between the age of seven and fourteen years, were compelled to attend school. There were doubts as to whether this did not interfere with the rights of parents. The Prussian view was, that it was due to society, that every child should receive an education that would fit him for his station in life. In Switzerland a law is vigorously enforced compelling all children to attend school, and officers are appointed whose duty it is to warn them first, and then, if they neglect it, to bring them before a magistrate for punishment. Children in that country cannot be apprenticed to a trade or business until they have undergone an examination before a board similar to the County Board of Examiners. If the boy were to be a tanner, he was examined in chemistry; if a mechanic, he was examined in the science of mechanics. Dr. R. next referred to the sound views entertained by the Pilgrim Fathers on education, and mentioned the fact that a plea of a notoriously neglected education was allowed in arrest of judgment, in the case of minors. In Iceland, too—where, notwithstanding the climate was rigid, the hearts of the people were warm and open—a law existed that a minor could not be convicted of a crime before inquiry had been made as to the state of his education; and if it was found to have been neglected, and his parents were at fault for the neglect, the minor was acquitted, and the parents punished in place of the child. In some parts of New England, truant laws were now in force.

2ND.—THE EXPEDIENCY OF A LEGISLATIVE FREE SCHOOL LAW.

The next subject he intended to introduce was that of Free Schools. The great majority of people were under the impression that the system of free schools should now be imposed by Act of Parliament, as the annual school meetings designed at first to afford an opportunity of discussing this question had ceased to throw any new light on the subject; and even the opponents of free schools, who were generally defeated at every annual meeting, were desirous of having Free Schools imposed by law, and thus save the annual return of an acrimonious discussion leading to no good result. He doubted the expediency of a compulsory law upon the subject at present, for, by the law as it exists, Boards of School Trustees could establish free schools, and many of the schools in the country were supported upon that principle. But it is for the public to judge whether or not they should all be placed by Act of Parliament upon the same footing.

3RD.—THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL LAW.

There was no doubt that the Grammar School Law, as it now stood, was very defective, and that no longer delay should take place in improving it. It seemed perfectly clear to him, that Grammar Schools could not be made better than they are, or in fact, could not be kept in the condition that they now are, unless further provision was made for their support than at present existed. It was the best economy to make Grammar Schools efficient. To make them efficient further means must be provided for their support. Two means had been suggested; one was that Grammar Schools should be established in every city and town municipality, and that such municipality should raise a proportionate sum, in order to receive the legislative grant. The other suggestion was, that the County Grammar Schools should retain the original character which they had obtained of being County Schools, before the pre-

sent system of public schools came into operation. He was of opinion that the whole country should be linked together, as it were, for the support of the Grammar Schools, and that the County Councils should be called upon to raise an equal sum with the Boards of School Trustees, a proportionate number of the trustees being now appointed by these Councils. Heretofore, County Councils have declined to impose a special assessment for Grammar School purposes; but as an inducement for them to do so, it was proposed that the Grammar Schools should be made free to the youth of the whole county, so that any farmer who would wish to give his son a superior education, or any young man who should desire to give himself a superior education, and who has the means of boarding himself in the city, should have the door open for his advancement. Young men might be assisted in their own neighborhoods by loans or subscriptions so as to raise a sufficient sum for their board in the city during the school term; and it was known that some of the most distinguished persons of every country have been those who obtained their education under difficulties of this kind. The whole subject would, doubtless, receive the fullest consideration from the meeting, so he would now proceed to other topics.

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN ONE OF THE FIRST DUTIES OF PARENTS.

Dr. Ryerson next proceeded to urge parents to consider it as one of their first duties to give their children such an education as would enable them to take care and make a proper use of property that might be left to them, or what they might make themselves by their own industry. He was rather against parents leaving their sons large fortunes, as it led them to be idle and careless, and sometimes dissipated, but considered it to the advantage of parents to settle a dowry on their daughters, as they generally took better care of it. He said he knew many young men who had received large fortunes from their parents, and had sunk into obscurity, while those that had been brought up to industrious pursuits in agriculture, &c., had made fortunes for themselves, and were among the first men of the country.

INFLUENCE OF AN ATTRACTIVE SCHOOL-HOUSE AND A GOOD TEACHER.

It was highly desirable to remove, as far as possible, all obstacles that might interfere with the education of youth. The very place of instruction should be rendered as attractive as possible. If the school-house should happen to be the meanest house in the neighborhood, as it not unfrequently was, the impression of the children attending it would naturally be that it was one of the meanest things in the world to attend school. It was requisite that the interior of the school-house should be rendered as clean and comfortable as possible. There was much true philosophy in the erection of a good school-house. Teachers, also, should be the most attractive persons in the estimation of their pupils. They should see to it that they conducted themselves in their bearing and their whole manner towards the school children as kindly as possible; for the art of kindness would surely make itself felt, and when teachers had secured the affection of their pupils, so as to command respect and attention, they would be in a position to exert the best influences for the education of the youth in their charge.

RESPECTFUL TREATMENT OF THE TEACHER BY PARENTS.

It is also necessary for parents to speak of the teacher in terms of esteem, and to treat him or her as respectfully as possible. If children heard their parents speak disrespectfully of the teacher, it was not likely that they could receive any good from him. It was frequently the case that parents themselves raised an impediment to the instruction of their children by speaking disrespectfully of the teacher. Even should circumstances arise that would render the teacher's removal from the school desirable, yet that impression should not be given to the children, while the teacher held his situation in the school. Parents should exert every effort to call forth the religious, moral, and intellectual powers of their children. It was of importance that both teacher and parents should combine and use every endeavor for the advancement of the education of youth.

TWOFOLD NATURE OF OUR SYSTEM OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

In the system of public instruction in this country there are two parts: that which pertains to the people and that which devolves upon the executive government. In every country where the people are educators of their own children, the erection and extension of schools depend entirely upon their co-operation; and the character of the instruction given in every educational establishment is an expression of the people themselves upon the question of education. The municipal institutions of Upper Canada were established by the late Hon. Robt. Baldwin. Those institutions embodied the principle of local self-government, and its tendency was to enlarge the public mind and will of the community. In 1850, Mr. Baldwin and himself devoted two or three days to the examination of every sentence, clause, and, he might almost say, every word of the School Act,